



# the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly  
publication of the

**BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND**

## Upcoming Events

December  
2020

### Virtual BSOP Meeting:

January 26, 7pm to 9pm, Annual business meeting. Social Hour begins at 6pm.

## December Words From the President

Winter is upon us with our sights set on 2021, hopeful to bring us together in person to share our bonsai, techniques, stories and friendship again.

In the spirit of a holiday party, which we were unable to provide because of Covid, if you have a decorated bonsai for the holidays we would like to see them! You can post them to our social media pages on Facebook and/or Instagram.

Our new BSOP board of directors have been voted on and chosen for 2021-2022 term. During the annual January general meeting we will have our business report and the official exchange of our board of Directors.

*Joe Johansen*, President

## December 2020 Mentorship

With Covid 19 still raging, Mentorship 101 and Mentorship 102, along with most of the world, remain in current limbo, but still with optimism regarding a re-emergence in the foreseeable future. In the interim, education can continue. Bonsai Society of Portland has been live-streaming educational programs, both as part of the monthly Zoom meetings and as additional content between meetings.

By all means, I would encourage tuning in to the weekly live.bonsaimirai.com live-streams, by Ryan Neil, every Tuesday evening. These remain online and so can be viewed at any time. The beginner-focused sessions and the BSOP-sponsored sessions are available at no cost to BSOP members, others at an annual subscription. They are superb! I would also strongly encourage signing up to receive the blog posts from Michael Hagedorn at crataegus.com and from Jonas Dupuich at bonsaitonight.com. Both are reliable, timely and free of cost.

The Pacific Northwest Bonsai Clubs Association (PNBCA) is an umbrella organization made up of the roughly two dozen established bonsai clubs in the region, of which BSOP is the largest. Members of BSOP are automatically members of PNBCA, the organization which coordinated the Pacific Northwest bonsai convention every other year until, of course, the plague

arrived. PNBICA has recently begun a series of quarterly educational Zoom programs, the first of which occurred on November 19 with Bjorn Bjorholm presenting a two hour program on care of deciduous and broadleaf evergreen trees.

The next session is currently in planning and will likely be scheduled in February. The sessions for the first year are with no cost to participants and are limited to 250 participating members of the region's clubs. Sessions include lecture and demonstration components and live questions and answers. The November session was excellent and if the programs for the remainder of the year are also, it is hoped that they can be continued in the future, perhaps with greater frequency.

Educational opportunities continue to exist! Most importantly, continue learning from your own work and observations! Many years ago I was advised to "not read the book, read the tree". Good advice, but we all need to find existing knowledge to become conversant with the language of the trees. Seek out the sources mentioned above, and others, to learn the dialects of the different tree species, and communicate regularly with your trees.

Cheers, *Howard Greisler*



Rock Planting with Chinese Juniper and Chinese Elm bonsai plantings.

Wirral Bonsai Show, [bonsai4me.com](http://bonsai4me.com)

# Review: Bonsai Heresy by Michael Hagedorn

NOVEMBER 13, 2020 by JONAS DUPUICH

I first heard about the idea for Michael Hagedorn's recent book, *Bonsai Heresy*, over ten years ago. Hagedorn explained that he had started collecting, and debunking, unproductive myths in the bonsai world. I couldn't wait to read it!

Finally, I got the chance when I saw drafts of the book earlier this year. The experience led to fun conversations with Hagedorn about bonsai soil, fertilizing, and decandling black pines, among other topics.

It wasn't until last month that I read the published version ahead of an interview with Hagedorn for the [Bonsai Wire Podcast](#). In short, I was super impressed.

*Bonsai Heresy: 56 Myths Exposed Using Science & Tradition* is the first book that helps us move away from beginning ideas about bonsai and move toward intermediate and advanced ways of thinking about our trees.

The book does this by investigating commonly held beliefs in the bonsai world and showing how they stand up against what we've learned from science and the bonsai tradition.

The opening chapter sets the tone with "*Bonsai methods should be exclusively based on science.*" The idea sounds good at first, but very little scrutiny is required to debunk this one.

A selection of subsequent chapter titles suggests the scope of the 345 page book:

*"Use a bigger pot to grow a bigger tree"*

*"Constantly pinch junipers"*

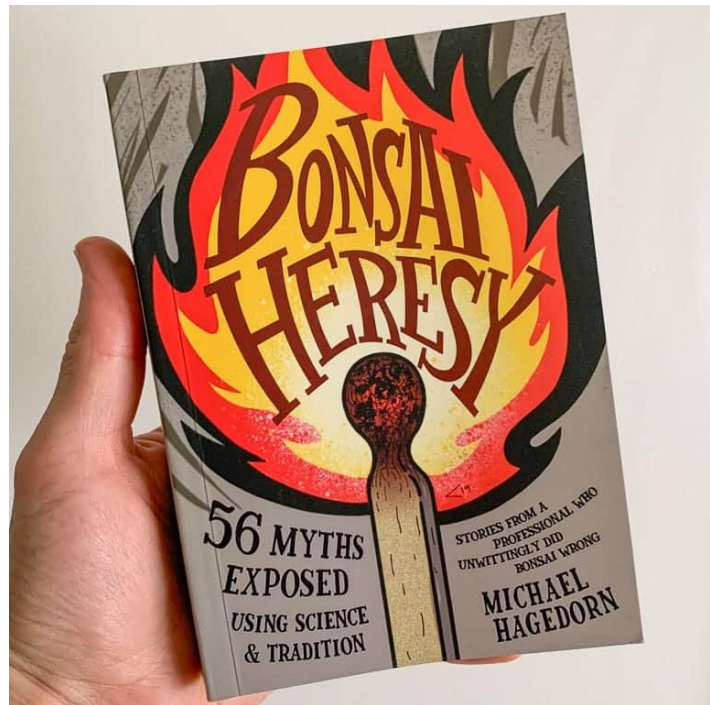
*"Stop fertilizing in the summer"*

*"Never let wire bite in"*

In addition to providing the source of selected myths and enlightened alternatives to them, Hagedorn includes resources that make the book a helpful reference guide.

The best examples of this are the three chapters that focus on bonsai dormancy. After dispelling the notion that zone hardiness is a safe measure for how much cold a tree can handle in winter, Hagedorn provides research showing that root hardiness doesn't always align with top hardiness.

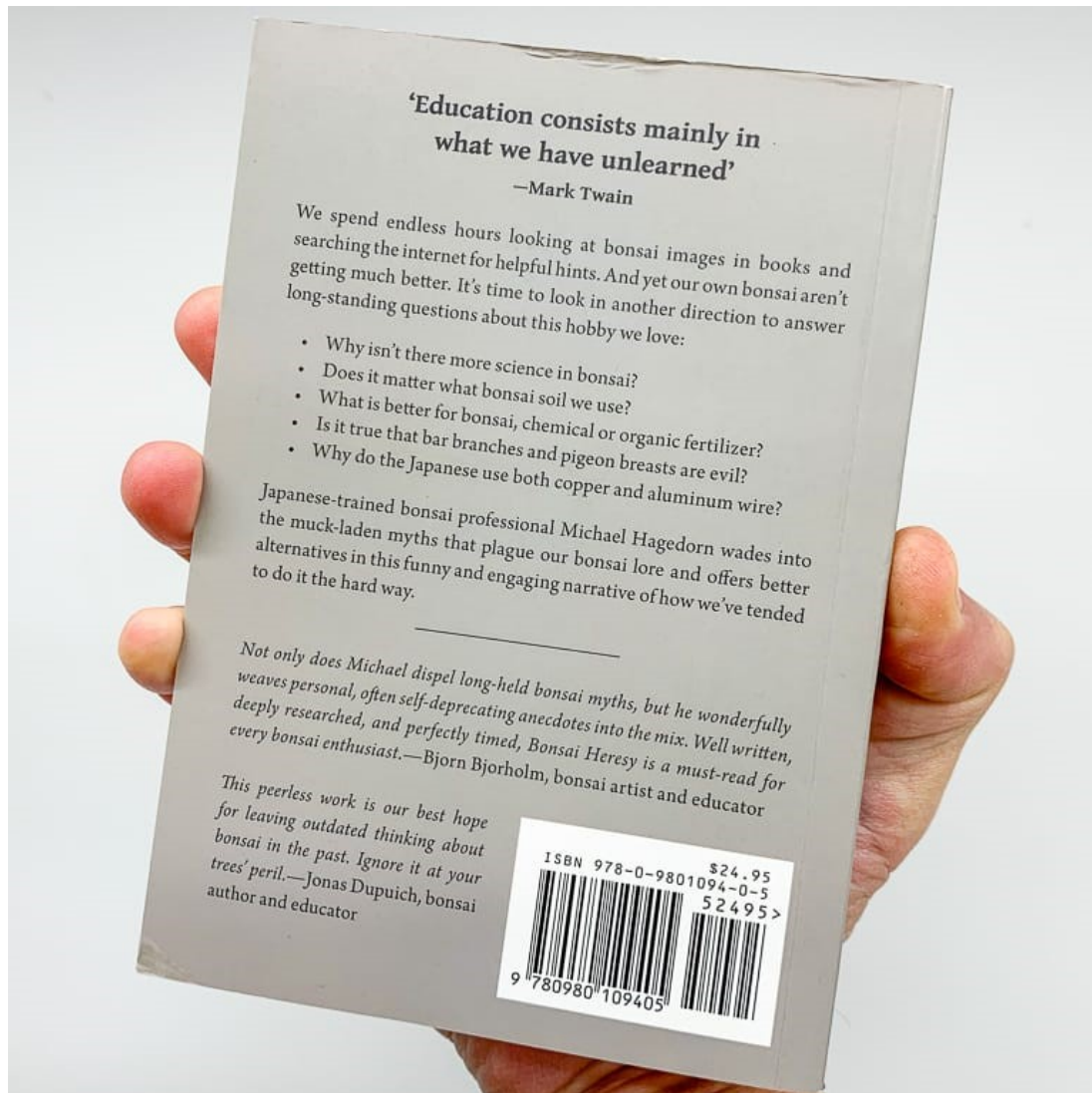
Toward this end, Chapter 13 lists the root hardiness and top hardiness of 70 different species. The data makes it clear that taking a conservative approach to overwintering bonsai is the right way to go.



Bonsai Heresy: 56 Myths Exposed Using Science & Tradition

In a conscious move to keep readers focused on the ideas in the book, Hagedorn uses no photographs to make his points. Instead, *Bonsai Heresy* relies on playful and outlandish images created by Sergio Cuan. In addition to being a talented bonsai practitioner and teacher, Cuan is an outstanding illustrator whose images provide spark and humor.

Speaking of humor, *Heresy* has plenty of it. Anyone familiar with Hagedorn's blog or his first book, *Post-Dated: the Schooling of an Irreverent Bonsai Monk* (see the review [here](#)), will recognize the reliance on anecdotes, often self-deprecating in nature, that instruct and entertain.



Back cover

If you haven't noticed, I'm clearly biased in favor of this book. I've been friends with Michael for twenty years and I think highly of his work as a bonsai professional, as a teacher, and as a writer.

To counter this bias, I welcome you all to add your impressions of the book in the comments below. For those of you who have not yet read it and want to learn more, the book is available from Stone Lantern Publishing at the following link:

[BONSAI HERESY: 56 MYTHS EXPOSED USING SCIENCE & TRADITION](#)

# Collecting Suiseki By Sami Amdouni

## Part 1: How to find Suiseki

The mountain is particularly favorable for the collection of stones for suiseki. However, you have to know how to spot the stones, know where they hide, collect them without damaging them, and then reveal their beauty. In this article we show you the process.

By Sami Amdouni - Suiseki is the perfect representation of the beauty of mother nature. Each stone is unique and can provide a feeling of inner well-being and tranquility. Going out to collect stones can quickly become an oxygen bubble to escape the stress of the city and work. The mountain is a place known to contain beautiful discoveries. Be as close as possible to nature, landscapes of high mountains, lakes and rivers, flowers, wild horses, raptors soaring in the sky and the whistling of marmots.

## Collecting Suiseki stones in nature

It is possible to find stones in the mountains, in forests, rivers, streams, on the sea board, anywhere really. But certain places are more favorable than others.

### The equipment

To collect stones, it is necessary to have a good backpack, with a good frame and protection for your back. Indeed, some stones can be heavy and have sharp edges. Do not forget to pack a pair of gloves, an ice ax to dig and turn the stones, a wire brush to do an initial cleaning on site and keep something to pack the stones to prevent them from knocking together and being damaged during transport.

### Dig up the stones

Once you are in the mountains, it's all about looking, browsing around to find the treasure you are looking for. The stones are often buried - only one piece protrudes above the surface - or it lies upside down. If you find a potential stone, use your ice ax to clear the circumference of the stone, taking care not to damage it. We have to turn over or take out several dozen stones before even hoping to find one with beautiful characteristics, some potential or something to it we simply like.

### Clean on site

The stones are often covered with a very hard gangue (dirt), which means having to imagine them through this deposit. It is only after some basic cleaning that you can appreciate the beauty of the collected stone. Obviously, sometimes we are disappointed when a stone has defects. Ensuring that the stone is not broken or cracked is also essential. Furthermore, even if it is no longer visible afterwards, the underside of the stone is important, because the more it is damaged, the more difficult the daiza (carved wooden base) will be.

On site, I therefore advise you to wet the stone and start cleaning it using a wire brush, or a knife, which will allow you not only to lighten the stone during transport, but also to verify that it interests you.

### Deep cleaning

Once back at home, deep cleaning can begin. It is necessary to work outside in a ventilated place. Before brushing, we first wet the stone to reduce the production of dust. The wire brush does not scratch the mineral because it is very hard. However, I advise you to test on an invisible part to make sure you don't damage the stone. We hold the stone very firmly to clean it with an electric wire brush: the speed of rotation of the tool could cause the stone to fly and break it, or could injure us. At this stage, the dust is very fine, so wearing a mask is recommended.

Care is taken to remove the deposit from the gangue. For stones that are very difficult to clean, it may be necessary to soak for several days in water. It is also possible to use dentist equipment to scrape the thinnest parts. The wire brush can leave a deposit on the stone, making it too shiny and artificial. It is important to clean with an abrasive brush to remove any traces of metal. Once cleaned, the stone is washed and rubbed with a microfiber cloth. The stone thus cleaned awaits its daiza, then to be well presented, at home or in exhibition.

### **Cleaning equipment**

A column drill with metal brushes and nylon abrasive brushes, a hand tool type Dremel with smaller metal brushes is necessary to access the narrowest parts of the stone. It is essential to not neglect protections such as gloves (metal brushes are very abrasive!), A dust mask and protective glasses against projections.

**THIS IS PART 1 OF A 2 PART ARTICLE REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION AND GRATITUDE TO THE AUTHOR, SAMI AMDOUNI.**

**( Submitted by Patrice Morrow. Part 2 will cover designing and manufacturing of a Daiza)**



# Scott's BRANCH TIPS

*BONSAI TECHNIQUE & PHILOSOPHY*

## The Oregon Hole

For those of you who tuned into last Saturday's Zoom session on winter care, here is the article that I promised. One of the challenges of winter care that we talked about was the fact that it can rain incessantly during our Oregon winters, to the point of compromising the health of our trees. This can be especially true during our wet springs and just after repotting.

One way to combat that challenge is to tilt the tree up on one side so that you increase the height of the water column inside the pot, which will drive the water out. As Andrew Robson noted in our Zoom meeting, be sure to switch sides once in awhile or you will start developing a one-sided root system. There is only one hitch in this scenario. You have to have a hole in the right location to drain all that water out. Sometimes you have one, and sometimes you don't.

Most contemporary American potters, like our own Vicki Chamberlain and Nao Takutake are adding many holes to the bottom of their pots for both drainage and anchoring, which is an ideal situation.

But many older and imported pots don't have those holes. Many of the antique Chinese pots that are so valued in the bonsai world have just one single, large hole in the middle of the pot. Making things worse, they often sagged before firing, when drying upside down, so the middle of the pot is raised creating quite a swampy environment for our bonsai.

A couple of years ago I started adding what I call the Oregon Hole to my pots. That is, one small diameter hole on each side of an ovular or rectangular pot, which will end up at the bottom of the tilt. I have been adding holes to my pots for many years to anchor trees down. This is pretty much the same technique, with just size and placement that varies.

The most important thing to consider is that we are drilling through stone – usually high-fired clay, which is super hard. To get through that material, you need specialized drill bits. I have been using spade shaped glass and tile bits for many years with great success. After this Saturday's Zoom, I decided that I had better try a diamond studded bit. Here is what I have found about both.



Left to right: 1/4" spade bit with straight shaft, 1/8" spade bit with quick load, 3/16 diamond tipped bit

Diameter is everything. This is really hard material that we are drilling through, so make the hole only as big as you need to. I often drill a hole only one eighth inch in diameter if I need to just pass an anchor wire through a container. Enlarging the hole to just a quarter inch is really about four times harder to drill. You get the picture. Strategy comes to play here also. Anything above a quarter inch and the soil will fall through, so I would have to add a screen to it, making more work. So, for my new diamond bit, I chose 3/16" size to make sure my soil stays intact.

The glass and tile bits come in two shapes. One is angled but with flat sides, the other, the spade bit, is rounded to a point and is what I prefer. I have not noticed a difference in brand and as you can see in the photo, I have both straight shaft and quick load versions. The one thing you absolutely do not want is a concrete bit, shown in the photo. It is easily identified by the flanges protruding beyond the shaft.



Concrete bit

They are designed to be used by a hammer drill to pound concrete to powder. We have to be much more delicate with our high-fired bonsai pot clay. The spade bits do break occasionally, and they do dull. I would armor yourself with more than one, because they will break at the most inconvenient time – like when you already have a tree bare rooted and waiting for its new home. I use spade bits to quickly add holes to high-fired Japanese terra cotta training pots. These pots are much harder than conventional Italian terra cotta, but softer than high quality bonsai pots and the spade bits go through these like butter. I have used the spade bits on bonsai pots with varying results. They almost always work, but the pots seem to vary greatly in their hardness.

Diamond bits are a newer arrival but they work great. You can get them in just about any size, and if you want anything larger than about a quarter inch, they are your only option. They work by having the diamonds glued around the tip of a circular shaft, so you are really cutting a ring. At our small size, that is really insignificant. The good thing is that they cut more reliably than the spade bits, and gives us another option.



Korean pot ready to drill



I took this opportunity to make a bit-to-bit comparison between spade and diamond bits on a pot that could use some holes. This is an older Korean pot with walls maybe a quarter inch thick and very hard. I cleaned the pot first and then proceeded.

Taking Andrew's hint from Saturday, I placed a piece of duct tape on the back side of the hole to be drilled to prevent blow out. With the diamond bit, it is better to start at about a 45-degree angle and grind a small hole to start the bit and then work yourself to a full vertical angle. I always have a water spray bottle to lubricate and cool the drill bit. I only needed to spray once and the bit went through in a minute or two of work.

Switching over to the familiar spade bit, I could go straight in because of the pointed tip. However, progress was very slow. To be fair, the bit was used quite a bit, and slightly larger in diameter, but I have to say that the diamond bit worked much better on this harder clay.



Drilling in progress



New hole

At that point, I just switched to diamond bit to finish things up. This hole did have some blow-out, as pictured, but I did not use the tape on it, wanting to compare the difference. The technique to prevent blow-out for a spade bit is to listen for the change in pitch as you are drilling. This sound change means that the bit has reached the other side and is starting to emerge. Stop immediately and begin drilling from the back-side. Though it is not exactly that easy to execute on a softer pot, when I am drilling fast and hard, I usually don't care on those. But you can try the duct tape trick.



Blow out

It was also mentioned that you can drill under water, but this gets operationally a little tricky. It's unneeded in most circumstances, but might work nice if you have a lot of pots of the same size to drill. This whole process makes a great winter project so that you are ready to go for spring repotting.

Happy Drilling., *Scott Elser*



Bonsai in the snow

[Bonsai4me.com](http://Bonsai4me.com)

## Trees For Sale

Evergreens include native and Itoigawa junipers, black and lodgepole pines, mountain hemlock and spruces, moderately priced, variety of sizes from hold in your hand to all one person wants to carry. Also maples, elms and accent plants.

Call 503 704 3891 to see the trees. Please wear your mask.

*Editor*

# FEEL FREE TO LOVE A TREE



## December Haiku

China to the moon  
Searching for suiseki  
Bringing back those rocks

### PRE-BONSAI PLANTS · BONSAI TOOLS

High-fired Pots • Mica & Plastic Training Pots  
Wire • Organic Fertilizers  
Mazama Pumice (1/16-3/8")  
Diatomite Rock from Nevada, USA  
Superior Black Compost • Red Cinder Rock (1/4-5/16")

Est. 1978



25321 NE 72nd Avenue  
Battle Ground, WA 98604  
Phone (360) 687-5641  
D Burnett

Need supplies?  
Call ahead for delivery  
at BSOP meetings.



Me? Obsessed with trees?  
Yes. Yes, I am.

Vaughn Chandler champions the trees, landscapes and property investments of the customers in his care. And he's one of the many reasons we've become the premier scientific tree and shrub care company in the world.

Contact us today at 503-722-7267 | bartlett.com

VAUGHN CHANDLER, Bartlett Champion



EVERY TREE NEEDS A CHAMPION.

# Portland Bonsai Supply



**Need supplies?**

**Order 24/7 from our web store**

**[portlandbonsaisupply.com](http://portlandbonsaisupply.com)**

**NEW Ceramic Pots available now**

**Coming Soon..Joshua Roth & Ryuga Tools**



6707 SW Pine Street, Portland, OR 97223

The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

**The Milwaukie Center**

**5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie OR 97222**

Enter parking lot from Rusk Road

Visitors are always welcome!

**Board of Directors**

President: Joe Johanesen

2nd VP-Membership: Patrice Morrow

Secretary: Laura Hudson

1st VP-Programs: Reid Parham

Treasurer: Patty Myrick

Past President: Jan Hettick

**Committee Chairs**

Ambassadors: Keith Wingfield

Auctions: Dane Burrell

Audio/Visual: Reid Parham

Facilities Coordinator: Reid Parham

Fall Show: Patrice Morrow & Jan Hettick

Formal Display: Scott Elser

Heritage: Steve Leaming, Brandon Myren

Hospitality: Brandon McMullan

Library: Barbara Devitt, Mir Isaac

Mentorship: Howard Greisler, Joanne Raiton

Newsletter: Peter Pelofske

Portland Nursery Show Reid Parham

Photographer: Jim Baggett

Raffle:

Social Media: Scott Tice

Spring Show:

Summer Picnic: Joe Johanesen

Vendor Coordinator: Reid Parham

Volunteer Coordinator: Patrice Morrow

Webmaster: Karl Holmes

Contact information is on the BSOP website [www.portlandbonsai.org](http://www.portlandbonsai.org) under

Resources/Member Services/Membership Directory